community

OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO THE LOW PAY COMMISSION CONSULTATION ON

APRIL 2025 NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE RATES

June 2024

About Community Trade Union

Community is a trade union recognised and registered in the UK. We were formed in 2004 from the merger of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and National Union of Knitwear, Footwear and Apparel Trades but now represent workers in many sectors of the UK economy including steel and manufacturing, education and early years, health, logistics, justice and custodial, the third sector, finance and professional services and many more.

This Official Response has been prepared on behalf of Community members and is a public document that will be published on our website following the conclusion of this consultation.

We undertook a survey of our members in May 2024 receiving over 1340 responses within two weeks. Our responses to this consultation reflect the results of this survey as well as casework and our wider experiences negotiating for good work and better pay for our members across sectors.

Statutory minimum wages have the potential of reducing inequality at the lower end of the wage distribution, filling the void left by declining collective bargaining in many countries and protecting the lowest paid workers from exploitation and extreme low pay. However, as with our previous findings, members in recognised branches remain statistically more likely to be on higher wages compared to those in unrecognised branches.

Of the members who responded, 13% earned the national living wage of £11.44 per hour or below (an increase of 7% over 2023). This included 2 respondents who are on the apprenticeship rate. 11% earned between the national living wage and the real living wage (as calculated by the living wage foundation) of £12, with 49% earning more than £12. This has marked a notable difference over previous years with a significant increase in those earning the national living wage and a notable reduction (down 12%) in those earning more than the national living wage, but less than the real living wage.

Whilst responses varied from £12 per hour to £20 the majority of members suggested that the living wage should be increased to around £15 which is in line with what we stated last year.

Community Trade Union
465c Caledonian Road
London, N7 9GX
www.community-tu.org

This Official Response was prepared by:

Kate Dearden
Head of Research, Policy & Politics

Martin Hodge
Head of Education Policy

The National Living Wage

2. What has been the impact of the NLW in the past year, particularly the most recent 9.8 per cent increase to £11.44 in April this year? Our critical interest is in its effects on employment, hours and earnings. We are also interested in the effect of the NLW on any of the areas listed below:

   a. *Profits*

   b. *Prices*

   c. *Productivity*

   d. *Pay structures and differentials*

   e. *Progression and job moves*

   f. *Training*

   g. *Investment*

   h. *Recruitment*

   i. *Job quality and security*

3. To what extent has the NLW affected different groups of workers, particularly those with protected characteristics (for example women, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities) and migrant workers?
4. How has the NLW's impact varied across different areas of the UK?
5. At what level should the NLW be set from April 2025?
6. Where do employers get their information about the NLW and its future path? Now that the NLW has reached its two-thirds target, do you have any comments on how the path was calculated and communicated?

According to research carried out over the 25 years of the National Minimum Wage, profits and prices have not notably been impacted by the most recent rises in the National Minimum Wage.

Some small and medium-sized employers have reported finding it harder to absorb the annual increases in the wage rates. Though this does not yet seem to be being felt by members. Smaller employers were more likely to describe short-term and unsustainable strategies for absorbing the increases in costs, such as using their own time or money to cover the gaps or getting support from family members to sustain business operations with increasing labour costs.[i]

Whilst there has been some adjustment of pricing, in many cases the associated costs have been offset by improved productivity and increased automation – such as the increase in the use of self-service check-outs in many retail environments, not just supermarkets.

The last few years have been full of turmoil – physical, mental and financial, affecting individuals, businesses and the whole economy – and the economic picture continues to be volatile. In 2018 it was estimated that only around 7% of the workforce was paid the National Living Wage, but workers in the bottom 30% of the pay distribution all benefited when it was increased as pay rates and differentials moved accordingly. More recently, pay for those in the brackets immediately above the minimum wage range has seen growth stagnate and the pay differentials between different grades and job roles has reduced.

Research from ISER at the University of Essex found that “around half of minimum wage workers moved into a job paid above the minimum wage each year, but most of these moves (around 80 per cent) are into ‘low-paid’ employment.” This has had the effect of compressing the pay distribution and reduced wage inequality, but “the rising minimum wage has not affected the likelihood of minimum wage workers moving into higher-paid jobs.” [ii]

Between November 2021 and June 2023 inflation was higher than wage growth in the UK, resulting in falling real terms earnings throughout this 20-month period. While UK inflation peaked at 11.1% in October 2022, it was not until April 2023 that it fell below double figures, and as of December 2023, was still at the relatively high rate of 4% … The decline in real term wages is just one of the aspects of the current Cost of Living Crisis, which has led to the steepest fall in living standards for a generation.[iii]

Due to this uncertain economic picture, it would be understandable if the domestic labour market weakened, “but at present the UK graduate labour market appears to be bearing up well” [iv] and, according to the BBC, wage growth remained strong, growing by approximately 4.2% in February 2024, even as the UK unemployment rate rose to its highest for almost a year. However, this wage growth when adjusted for inflation, means that wages only grew in real terms by 2.9%.

Overall, many employers reported positive attitudes towards the increases in the National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage rates, for reasons including fair pay for their workers, and transparency of the annual increases, though the minimum wage is by far the most prevalent. Moreover, some employers reported paying their employees above the National Living Wage rates to improve staff recruitment and retention, or to make employees feel valued.[v] However, in some roles, this has meant a pay freeze for those only slightly further up the pay scale.

We continue to have worries about those in the most critical industries – such as carers, the health service and education (support staff) as well as those in logistics. Workers in these sectors are often subject to additional mandatory overtime expectations which can dramatically reduce their hourly rate causing it to fall below the minimum required by law. As members noted:

- *My agency's hourly rate has not kept match, and as a live in carer, I'm on call 22 hours a day, so difficult to calculate appropriate hourly rate.*
- *My salary has gone up - very grateful. We are unable to afford as many people, so we are very busy and pulled every which way.*

In some parts of the UK, the National Living Wage remains insufficient to provide an adequate standard of living, or reflect the level of skill and experience of our members working in low paid roles.

- *Minimum living wage needs to increase with London [cost of living]*
- *Wages have risen, but not in line with the increase in the cost of living for everyone*

Again, there are concerns amongst members that some employers see the National Living Wage as an acceptable minimum regardless of the necessary cost of living meaning that other staff wages have not been increased and higher wage ranges, such as the Living Wage Foundation rate is no longer offered. Other employers are reducing the headcount and employing staff through agency contracts.

- *The company is desperately trying to reduce the level of contract workers, moving to agency instead.*

The outsourcing of workers is already prevalent amongst couriers, cleaners and security staff. Companies can engage these individuals on a self-employed contractor basis, where no minimum wage applies, rather than as employees. This does nothing to confirm the security of a regular wage that the national minimum wage and national living wage were brought in to preserve.

The fundamental reason for seeking job security and a regular income is that it is a pre-condition for personal autonomy, in the sense of being able to construct one's own life and fulfil one's ambitions for personal fulfilment. [vi] The gig culture is often promoted as offering flexibility and choice, which indeed some people do value, but it is about convenience not uncertainty. Under the strategy of outsourcing, employers have exploited the possibility of exporting part of the workforce, such as cleaning or catering, to external contractors. This does nothing to secure employment, nor to address the widening chasm in the gender pay gap and this may be something that no minimum wage can address.

As we mentioned previously, like pensions and their 'triple-lock' it would seem appropriate for the National Living Wage to have an in-built connection to the state of the economy, inflation and the cost of living in order to continually have a positive impact on the lowest paid.

Members commented:

- *Minimum wage should be related to living costs including housing etc. many people are barely able to afford to be a lodger let alone rent a comfortable place to live. But also wage progressions should be fair and clear.*
- *They should go up to a £15 pound an hour so that people can pay there (sic) rent or mortgage, bills and have money left over for food and the occasional day out or a treat once in a while.*
- *The rates should be equalised at age 18 and all rises … should apply to everyone 18 and over ... There should be an automatic annual increase each year on 1 April of either £0.50 per hour or CPI + 2%, whichever is the greater.*

As noted in our preamble, whilst responses varied from £12 per hour to £20 the majority (38.5%) of members suggest that the living wage should be increased to around £15 from April 2025.

We appreciate that the National Minimum Wage is 'no silver bullet' in raising peoples' standards of living and addressing poverty, but at the moment, it is a necessary tool to have in the box.

Experience of those on low pay over the past year

7. How have changes in the cost of living affected workers on or close to the NMW and NLW and how, if at all, has this affected worker needs and expectations from their employment and pay?
8. What has happened to quality of work recently? For example, have workers experienced changes in contract types, flexibility, workplace harassment and work intensification (e.g. greater expectations for workers to work more flexibly, with greater effort, to higher standard etc).
9. What has happened to wider benefits available to workers (including premium pay and non-pay benefits across the workforce)?
10. What are the barriers preventing workers from moving to a new job, particularly one that is better paid?
11. How has access and cost of childcare and transport affected workers' ability to move into work or to a better paying job?
12. What opportunities are there for progression to better paid work for low paid workers and how common is promotion?
13. What has been workers' experience of the Universal Credit system and how the minimum wage interacts with it? Has these influenced workers approach to how many hours they work and whether they move to another better paying job?

In 2023, the lowest-paid occupation in the United Kingdom was estimated to be retail cashiers, and check-out operators, at £382.70 per week, followed by childminders at £385.40. Waiting and Bar staff earned a little over £405 with teaching assistants earning around £414 per week.

Despite the not-insignificant increases to the National Minimum Wage, especially for those aged 16-18, 18-21 and those over 21, it has still not been enough to improve living standards with many individuals unable to meet increased rental and utilities costs on one salary alone. The UK has had a relatively rapidly increasing minimum wage rate moving up to a comparatively high level by international standards. Yet at the same time the UK population is experiencing the worst parliament ever for declining living standards and poverty levels are continuing to increase.[vii]

The cost of living increased sharply across the UK during 2021 and 2022 with the annual rate of inflation reaching 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, before subsequently easing. Recent data shows the annual inflation rate was 3.2% in March 2024 [viii] with all of the previous cost increases and price rises now 'baked in'. So it comes as little surprise to note that as of 7 April 2024, 56% of households in Great Britain reported that their cost of living had increased in the previous month[ix]

Food costs have risen dramatically - over the two years from March 2022 to March 2024 food prices rose by 23.9%. (It previously took over 12 years, from September 2009 to March 2022, for average food prices to rise by the same amount)[x] with rent and utilities also rising sharply again.

Members noted that they felt it was reasonable for an employee working full-time to be able to afford food and drink and take a holiday each year. Furthermore, 95% of respondents felt that housing costs should not take up more than half of a month's wages for someone who works full time.

According to Zoopla[xi], average rents across the UK has grown 7.2% in the year to April 2024, rising most quickly in Wales (9.5%), Scotland (9.9%) and the North East of England (9.9%) despite these being some of the areas with the lowest annual salaries. Indeed, London recorded the lowest percentage increase of 4.2%, though average rents in London exceed £2,000 per month which is more than double those across Wales, and treble those in the North East. This annual increase exceeds last year's record high rate of 6.2% becoming the highest annual percentage change since this UK data series began in January 2016.[xii]
In addition, council tax has seen the average Band D rate increase by 5.1%.[xiii]

Therefore, in order for average rental costs to take up no more than half of a month's gross wage as mentioned above, the minimum wage would need to be at least £14.40, based on a 40 hour week, before any other housing costs are filtered in.

Around 4 in 10 adults (41%) who pay energy bills said it was very or somewhat difficult to afford them. This proportion was at a high of 49% in the period covering 17 to 29 May 2023, also 44% of adults in Great Britain are using less fuel, such as gas or electricity, in their homes because of the rising cost of living.[xiv] Despite the recent reductions in the fuel price cap, with gas and electric bills in the UK much higher in 2024 than they have been in previous years, the idea of an "average" gas or electric bill has been skewed. This means that it seems like energy prices are falling, even though they remain historically high due to the UKs dependence on gas for both heating and cooking, as well as electricity generation.

Both the government and opposition have been clear about the need to address the cost and availability of childcare in order to support working parents. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies 16% of families using formal childcare for a pre-school-aged child report finding it difficult or very difficult to manage these costs.[xv] In 2019, among families using formal childcare, the median family with a 1-year-old spent over £90 a week, and the cost of provision has risen too with data from one survey reported by the IFS showing costs rose by 60% in cash terms between 2010 and 2021.

This means, for many of the lowest paid, it simply does not pay to work despite the fact that the UK graduate labour market appears strong[xvi] and wages are slowly rising above the rate of inflation.[xvii] According to the BBC, wage growth, remained strong into February 2024, growing by approximately 4.2%, even as the UK unemployment rate rose to its highest for almost a year. However, this wage growth when adjusted for inflation, means that wages only grew in real terms by 2.9%.

The cost-of-living rises have meant that those on lower salaries are able to prepare less for the future with members commenting:

- *I can't pay as much into my pension as salary sacrifice as I could 2 months ago*
- *[For example] People are now are unable to contribute 10% into their pensions as it takes the basic salary below NMW.*
- *Wages are so poor that it's less than minimum wage if you pay 6% into your pension.*

In relation to the impact of the changes and increase to the National Minimum Wage from April 2024, many members noted that there had been “No major changes” as “almost all people around me earn over minimum wage”. Others noted that the changes had not personally affected them much:

- *“It doesn't affect me but I see it happening around me and people are loosing (sic) jobs or having their hours cut.”*

The biggest number of comments from members were about the impact on the number of jobs and the relating impact on workload

- *Staffing levels go down as wages increase to offset the cost so workload increases and the staff left are no better off as they have to take up the slack of the people who have disappeared.*
- *Workload is crazy*
- *Everywhere is under staffed that’s why everywhere I go I am always in a queue!*

And others noted that an increase to the minimum wage doesn’t necessarily increase the wages of all workers.

- *Skilled workers pay does not increase which creates no significant benefit for skilled workers over labourers wages … Skilled workers are leaving sectors to have easier stress free jobs on minimum wages. Skilled workers rates don’t rise inline with the minimum wage rises, which means these are worse off than before*
- *I saw an effective decrease in pay (no pay rise) for long standing staff members in order for companies to pay the minimum wage. This meant that long service, loyalty and performance related pay has become meaningless over the years.*
- *My salary has not increased since 2013, when I started working for this company. I am a ‘manager’ but believe in October I will have an increase just to be on minimum wage*
- *Nat min wage now same as admin level wage bands 2.*

What we need to see are sustained periods of growth in the economy in order to support higher wages and to improve the cost of living for so many workers, and not just those earning the lowest wages, but also those who are just about managing in the grades above the minimum and living wage. As one member pointed out:

- *Nobody wants to work for the minimum wage, when Aldi or warehouses are giving more money per hour and more benefits.*

Young people

The NMW youth rates from 1 April 2024 are £8.60 for 18-20 year olds (a 14.8 per cent increase) and £6.40 for 16-17 year olds (a 21.2 per cent increase).

14. How have recent changes in the minimum wages for young people affected their employment prospects?
15. The NLW age of eligibility came down from 23 to 21 on April 1 2024 – what has been the impact of this?
16. How do the youth minimum wage rates influence employers' decisions about hiring and pay, and young people's decisions about employment?
17. What other factors determine pay for young people aside from the rates? For example, job role, skills or length of time in the job.
18. Why do employers make use of the youth rates (including pay rates above the youth minimum wages, but below the NLW)? To what extent has this been affected by the recent tight labour market?
19. At what level should these rates be set from April 2025?
20. Our advice to the Government on the future of the NMW recommended lowering the threshold for the NLW over time to 18 if the evidence allows. We welcome any comments on these recommendations.

Community Union were encouraged by the move to implement the National Minimum Wage for workers over the age of 21 and would support a move to further lower the application to all those over the age of 18 in line with our policy position of equal pay for equal work.

- *Minimum wage should be the same across the board for all age groups as someone who is 18 will be doing the same job as someone who is 30, 40, or 70!*

The impact of the introduction of the minimum wage has been positive in many ways. Whilst it has been effective in rising wages and lifting many directly out of poverty, there have been some wider benefits such as:

- *Other support staff have realised how poorly they have been paid and how far their income has slipped back over the years. My employer may not be able to keep me on after my current contract ends in August.*
- *The recent increases in the minimum wage rate has meant that the minimum wage has come up to the level of wages paid to staff such as machine operators and laboratory technicians. As a result annual pay rises have been above inflation.*

We noted previously our concerns that since the introduction of the minimum wage back in 1999, some employers may have been discouraged from hiring less experienced staff due to the incentive of reduced wages for younger workers, which until recently applied to all under the age of 23.

- *New staff are now on the same rate as experienced staff who have a lot of years service.*
- *I work for an employer who pays most of its employees well above the minimum wage. We all got a 4.5% raise this year, perhaps influenced by the increase in the NMW.*

The highest earning age group for full-time workers in the United Kingdom in 2023 were those aged between 40 and 49, with an average hourly salary of £19.83 an hour. By contrast, workers that were 16 to 17 … were the lowest earning age group.[xviii]

It is worth pointing out that many young people (under the age of 21) are in full-time employment and yet are unable to meet monthly obligations for rent, services, insurance and food. We have already pointed out the high and rising costs of rent and utilities across the country and this is especially the case in places of particularly high cost such as major cities and London.

We asked members what should happen to the salary of those aged 18-20 and 90% felt that it should be increased in line with, or more than, the rate of the cost-of-living.

Apprentices

The NMW Apprentice Rate from 1 April 2024 is £6.40 (a 21.2 per cent increase).

21. The Apprentice Rate increased substantially this year. What do you expect the effects of this increase to be?
22. What is the outlook for the recruitment and employment of apprentices?
23. How widely used is the Apprentice Rate (including pay rates above the Apprentice Rate but below the relevant age-related minimum wage rate)? What kind of apprenticeships are paid this rate? What kind of jobs do these apprenticeships (paid at or just above the Apprentice Rate) lead to?
24. Our advice to the Government on the future of the NMW recommended significant changes to the treatment of apprentices, including the replacement of the Apprentice Rate by a discount against the relevant NMW age rate. We welcome any comments on these recommendations.

Community is not responding to these questions.

Compliance and enforcement

25. What issues are there with compliance with the minimum wage and what could be done to address these?

26. What comments do you have on HMRC's enforcement work?

Official figures from the Government for 2023 show that 365,000 workers are recognised as being paid below the theoretical minimum wage, despite another 524 companies being named and shamed by HMRC.[xix] The vast majority of these companies operate in the food, drink and retail sectors, which together with the delivery sector and childcare and Early Years education offer some of the lowest salaries in the UK.

Our survey of members highlighted the fact that the government needs to do more to ensure the minimum wage is enforced and to take action against employers who routinely flout the law. Community believe that widening collective bargaining coverage is the most effective way to address these challenges with the courts only being needed for legal enforcement. Notably our Member Service Centre has not received a significant number of complaints regarding compliance, indicating that workers who have the protection of a union are less likely to face challenges.

80% of members felt that too little was currently being done by the government to enforce the current minimums and that other strategies could be employed to engage with employers. They suggest:

- *More publicity to employers reminding them that all extra duties including staff meetings must be paid if this takes staff under minimum wage for that week.*
- *Looking at salaried public sector workers and the actual hours they work and the rate they are actually receiving per hour.*
- *Use payroll software to ensure payments below NMW cannot be processed.*
- *Make it a legal necessity that hours worked are shown on payslips and P60s etc so that the employee and HMRC can see immediately if the minimum wage is not being paid.*
- *Massive fines on employers who don't pay national minimum wage, including salaried staff who are on enforced overtime (such as junior doctors) which means they are often left earning less than the minimum wage*

In addition, we noted the strength of feeling of members when we stated last year that the government lacks the capacity to oversee businesses which pay cash-in-hand or otherwise have irregular pay structures. Members are clear that there needs to be a:

- *Clamp down on black economy, cash in hand work, temp workers and gig economy*

And this is supported by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research who note "They pay cash in hand, they don't worry about the wage, they just do a deal with a person, […] there is nobody out there checking on that, on their safety or anything at all. [..] that's the area that I think is very neglected."[xx]

And enforcement is not just about ensuring the minimum wage sum is enforced, but as previously mentioned, ensuring salaried employees are not falling below the minimum wage threshold through mandatory or enforced overtime. Having to work 50 hours a week to save any kind of money is bad for people's health and is generally only possible for people that don't already have children or other dependants. In some sectors (TAs in state schools) their pay structure is effectively below minimum wage.

Members suggested that ways to enforce compliance with the National Minimum Wage could include:

- *Threaten companies known not to not pay min wage salaries with trade license suspensions or fines of 10% their annual turnover profit*
- *Heavily fine those employers who do not pay the legal standards, back pay from those fines those employees who were underpaid, if they still don't pay jail them up to a max of 5 years*
- *Draconian penalties for infringement, including public naming and shaming and large fines; end loopholes whereby delivery and minicab workers are categorised as self-employed*

Though there were comments that suggested it didn't matter what action was taken:

- *Companies don't even pay the full tax they owe so I doubt anything can be enforced for pay. The top of Companies should be held responsible. Then and only then with a prison sentence hovering above them, will anything be done.*

Community believes that HMRC's work could benefit from increased visibility and media attention to ensure that workers are aware of their rights and of the fact that prosecution does happen. It would also be prudent for other agencies to be engaged at the local level and for agencies to work together and share information to further ensure compliance.

- *Actually getting the local authorities to oversee enforcement.*
- *Have a minimum wage hotline where people can give information and remain anonymous if they wish.*
- *Responsibility for enforcement and compliance regarding the law on the national minimum wage should be transferred to a newly formed Department of Labour in the UK Govt.*

Accommodation Offset

27. What has been the effect of recent increases in the offset on employers' decisions on the provision of accommodation?
28. What impact does the offset have on workers? What are the hours, pay and working conditions of workers for whom the offset is deducted?
29. Are there particular issues created by the current design of the offset?
30. Last year we recommended that a quality standard and suitable enforcement regime are put into place as soon as possible. This would need to be implemented before we could recommend further significant changes to the offset. What would the impact of this policy be for employers and how would it effect the accommodation they provide?
31. We also recommended a minimum hours requirement before accommodation costs can be deducted. If implemented what would the effect of this policy be and what should be considered when setting a minimum hour's requirement?

Community is not responding to these questions.

Economic outlook

32. What are your views on the economic outlook and business conditions in the UK for the period up to April 2025? We are particularly interested in:
    - the conditions in the specific sector(s) in which you operate.
    - the effects of Government interventions to support the economy and labour market.
    - the current state of the labour market, recruitment and retention.
33. To what extent have employers been affected by other major trends in the economy and labour market: for example, inflation, Brexit, the shift to homeworking or changes in the numbers of migrant workers in the UK?
34. Apart from the minimum wage, what are the key drivers of pay decisions in low-paying sectors and occupations? For example, this could include the cost of living, availability and retention of staff, changes to Universal Credit/other benefits, access to transport or homeworking.
35. How do employers balance pay pressures for low-paid workers with those for others higher up pay scales? In this context, how do employers decide the money available for their pay bill?
36. How has inflation and the cost of living factored into wage setting? What has been your experience of wage growth and inflation in the last year, and what are your views on forecasts for the next couple of years?

From April 2024, Department for Work and Pensions benefits that are linked to inflation were uprated by 6.7% (in line with the annual CPI inflation rate in September 2023), as were inflation-linked tax credits elements and benefits administered by HM Revenue and Customs. For 2024/25 the basic State Pension and new State Pension will be increased by 8.5% in line with average earnings growth.[xxi]

It is clear, therefore that benefits and pensions have again risen in line with inflation, and yet this does not seem to similarly afflict wages. Community remains deeply concerned that wage growth does not and has not kept up with the record levels of inflation. As a result of rising inflation, those wage settlements which were, at the time of negotiation above inflation, become eroded pushing the lowest paid further into deprivation. And, even as inflation begins to fall and settle, its impact is still felt through price rises that are now 'baked in'.

At the time of writing, inflation (CPIH) was 3.8%, still some way above the Bank of England's target, though significantly down on the historic highs of 2022.

According to the Office for National Statistics, the estimated number of vacancies continues to fall, down by 17.3% over the previous year. However, there remain labour shortages in key industries such as health and logistics where employers have found it difficult to recruit and retain staff for key roles. Brexit also continues to have a marked effect, particularly with respect to trade difficulties and shortages of raw materials especially in manufacturing. Rising energy costs have significantly affected our public sector employers and risk making our steel sector unsustainable.[xxii]

Certainly, the 2023 report from *What do Graduates do?* notes: "The demand for graduates is strong and apparently increasing. It is quite likely that at present there are more vacancies for workers with degree or equivalent qualifications than there are unemployed graduates."[xxiii]

The annual *High Fliers* report agrees that, following a significant cut in graduate employment at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic: "The number of graduates recruited in 2022 jumped by 14.5%, compared with graduate recruitment in 2021, the biggest-ever annual increase in graduate vacancies, taking graduate recruitment to its highest level yet."[xxiv]

Where there are vacancies, they are not entry-level appointments demonstrating the need for employers to have a care where developing salary structures to ensure that differentials between the employment grades and levels can be maintained.

Members note:

- *I work for an employer who pays most of its employees well above the minimum wage. We all got a 4.5% raise this year, perhaps influenced by the increase in the NMW.*
- *Wages have gone up for all but by a higher percentage for those on the lowest pay rate. Some feel this is not fair but budget restraints mean that it was not possible to give everyone the same percentage pay rise.*
- *When I started in 2008 there was a distinct progression level. A clear gap between level 1 and level 2 and level 5 (the highest achievable for most support staff in a school and approx. 30% higher per hour). Well worth aspiring too and putting in the extra hours of learning to achieve. Now school support staff pay has been hit two fold. The minimum wage has increased massively the lower pay band amount per hour but the percentage hasn't been kept in the grade structure. This has affected the ability to recruit mature experienced staff with many leaving in droves. Aldi pay more to stack shelves than a HLTA receives in schools. My own pay has not kept with inflation or with progression. In fact, my pay … has only just matched my quality supervisor pay … [from] 1999. The gap between teaching staff and non teaching staff widens further.*

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